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Stimulus funding to help clean up ports

By Kristopher Hanson, Staff Writer

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. Arnold Schwarzenegger, left, Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster, center, and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa in the Port of Long Beach on Thursday. (Jeff Gritchen / Staff Photographer)

Photo Gallery | Long Beach Seen Blog

Port authorities received \$6 million in federal stimulus money Thursday to spur continued replacement and retrofitting of soot-spewing diesel equipment blamed for contributing to some 5,000 premature deaths annually in communities surrounding San Pedro Bay.

The money will help clean up about 140 cranes, yard tractors, forklifts and tugboats based in the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, which air

quality regulators list as the region's largest fixed source of health-damaging air pollution.

"It's another step in helping relieve the burden residents and workers living near the port face every day," said U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Director Lisa Jackson during a visit Thursday to Long Beach. "These residents and workers bear the brunt of diesel pollution leading to 5,000 premature deaths in Southern California alone."

The port money is part of a \$26.5-million round of grants awarded to Southern California communities most affected by pollution caused by heavy industry moving goods to and from California's seaports and transportation hubs.

Funding comes from the \$787-billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which has also helped fund security upgrades in local ports in recent months.

Other monies announced Thursday will help repower diesel trains serving Southland railyards, fund exhaust filters on construction equipment owned by Caltrans and retrofit diesel school buses used in and around the Los Angeles basin.

Jackson was joined at Pier G in Long Beach by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.


"This funding will further California's progress in cleaning our air while also supporting and creating green jobs, pumping up local economies

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and helping protect the health of Californians."

Attendees pointed out the success of a local entrepreneur who founded a heavy-duty electric truck factory in Harbor Gateway, Balqon Corp., which produces all-electric trucks hauling containers to and from local marine terminals.

The company's 30 or so green-and-white rigs emit no pollutants and have a range of about 40 miles per charge - ideal for the short hauls most truckers make between waterfront marine terminals and railyards located about five miles inland.

"These are the kind of innovative technologies we're encouraging," Villaraigosa said. "These ports are at the forefront of a new era in transportation, shipping and trade."

Jackson said the grants will help slash some 26 tons of diesel particulate matter, 453 tons of nitrogen oxides and 920 tons of carbon dioxide emissions from local skies annually.

"It's a start, but we're committed to continuing the momentum of our Green Port policies and invest a lot more time and energy into encouraging these efforts to green these ports," Villaraigosa said. "The world is watching."

To date, the EPA has awarded more than \$7 billion to fund or supplement a variety of environmental projects across the country, including designing new long-range vehicle batteries, creating solar and wind-power farms and studying alternative fuels.

The ports have also applied for grants to help further research into new technologies like magnetic levitation trains to



Lisa Jackson, administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, speaks in the Port of Long Beach on Thursday. (Jeff Gritchen / Staff Photographer)

carry containers from marine terminals to local railyards, thus reducing the need for trucks.

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